



April “Nutrition Connection”

Dear Diary...On-Line Journaling:

Logging Your Way to a Healthier Weight

Seasonal Recipe: Asparagus Ribbons with Lemon and Goat Cheese

In over 10 years of practice as a dietitian, I have witnessed the power of journaling and its contribution to reaching personal health goals. Not only do these clients reach their goals, but their success is sustainable. The act of journaling enhances both accountability and awareness; two keys to goal achievement.

Several years ago, the only means of journaling was to take a pen to paper. My, how times have changed! Today, virtual journaling via phone or computers equip us with instant gratification and automatic feedback.

For those who don't find journaling, let's say...pleasurable, I would first encourage you to give some of these on-line applications a try. You might be surprised and find it easier and more rewarding than imagined! I do not believe that journaling is a task that is required for life, but it is especially useful when you initiate a new eating plan or simply need to get back on “track.”

Working closely with clients and their on-line journals, I have found the following sites to be user-friendly, have a large database of foods choices, and provide tailored and personalized feedback: “[Lose It](#)” (*available on-line and iPhones*) & “[My Fitness Pal](#)” (*available on-line and multiple smart phones*). Regardless of the on-line journal you decide to use, this *Nutrition Connection* will provide you with tips to make the most out of your journaling experience.

Getting Started: Once you have created a username and password for your program, you will enter your age, gender, height, current and goal weight, and activity to determine your daily calorie goal. For those seeking weight loss, most *sound* programs will limit maximum weight lost to 2 pounds per week. Losing more than 2 pounds per week is typically attributed water loss and lean tissue (muscle), which is not the goal!

Logging Foods: An important feature of any on-line journal is the number of food choices in the database. With both “Lose It” and “My Fitness Pal,” you can easily locate a wide variety of both store/name brands and restaurant-based food choices. I often find my clients get frustrated when they cannot find the *exact* food in the database, such as a lasagna dish from

the mom & pop restaurant they often frequent. It is important to note that the goal of logging your foods is not to find the exact food match, but to find a food similar in portion and main ingredients. The *sheer act of logging* is what supports your health goals, not the accuracy of every entry.

If you eat like most of us, the range of your food choices (especially at breakfast and lunch) is small. We often eat the same foods over and over. Due to that fact, after logging for 1-2 weeks, you might find that journaling takes significantly less time then it did when you started. Once foods have been entered, they are put into a “favorite” category making the food or meal easy to find and add.

Tracking Exercise: In addition to logging your foods, programs offer the option to enter physical activity as well. Most programs will give you additional calories to eat based on how much exercise you completed. As an example, if your calorie goal was originally 1500 calories, and you burned 300 calories in exercise, you will now be granted 1800 calories for the day. If your goal is weight loss, I often caution my clients to indulge in their exercise calories for two reasons: 1) many on-line programs overestimate the amount of calories we burn in exercise 2) sticking with the goal calorie budget (1500 calories, in this case) will allow you to lose the weight at a faster rate. Remember, it is much easier to EAT 300 calories than burn 300 calories in a 3-mile run.

Goals: Another valuable feature of online journals/apps is the ability to log daily weights. I encourage my clients to weigh often (*weighing in the buff, first thing in morning, after using the restroom is the most accurate way to do this*). While weighing daily might not be for everyone, the act of recording morning weights supports awareness and accountability. It is important to know that weight is affected by hydration status, glycogen storage (1 gram of carbohydrate holds on to ~3 grams of water), “waste” in your body, and hormones. It is very normal for a weight to bounce between 1-4 pounds on a daily basis. Accept that fluctuations in weight are normal, and the real emphasis should be on weight **trends over time**.

Beyond the Numbers: Logging your daily intake and receiving quantitative feedback is motivating for many, but I also believe the lesson goes beyond the numbers. Honest logging allows you to face potential emotional and mindless eating, and encourages you to “pause” before putting something in your mouth if you have to record it. Embrace these savvy tools to as an opportunity to learn and grow in your journey to good health!

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Asparagus Ribbons with Lemon and Goat Cheese

Creamy goat cheese crowns a refreshingly bracing salad. Because the asparagus is shaved, it does not have to be cooked. Thick asparagus spears work best when it comes to making ribbons like these.

Source: Cooking Light JULY 2007

Yield: 8 servings (serving size: 1/2 cup)

Ingredients

- 1 pound large asparagus spears, trimmed
- 1 1/2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces) crumbled goat cheese



Preparation

Hold each asparagus spear by the tip end. Shave asparagus into ribbons with a vegetable peeler to measure 3 cups. Reserve asparagus tips for another use. Combine asparagus and tomatoes in a medium bowl.

Combine chives and next 6 ingredients (through 1/4 teaspoon salt), stirring with a whisk. Drizzle over the asparagus mixture, tossing gently to coat. Top with goat cheese.